

WETLANDS WORK...



...we work for wetlands!

New York & Long Island Field Offices,
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

<http://nyfo.fws.gov>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Environmental Contaminants Program in New York Restores Wetlands

One of our missions is to restore natural resources, including wetlands, that have been injured by oil spills or hazardous substance releases. First, the natural resource trustees conduct a damage assessment to determine the extent of injury to natural resources caused by the hazardous substance release. This information is used to determine the amount of restoration that is needed. The trustees then negotiate a settlement with the responsible parties for the cost of restoration, loss of use of the land or natural resources by the general public, and money spent to assess damages. Once a settlement has been reached, the trustees take action to restore the injured resources. Finally, the trustees monitor the completed restoration projects to ensure success. Wetland restoration projects associated with our natural resource damage assessment program are being planned at Joseph Davis State Park and the Town of North Tonawanda in Niagara County; the Town of Brookhaven, Nassau County; and the Town of Seneca, Wayne County, PA.



Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) in New York Restores Wetlands

We have focused our “Partner’s Program” on wetlands because of the important role they play in the lives of so many migratory birds which are trust responsibilities of the Service. Early restoration techniques focused on returning hydrology to formerly drained wetlands as economically as possible. Restoration techniques have been refined over the years and now wetland restoration projects are carefully crafted to blend into the landscape and involve: creating micro-topography, establishing complexes of small seasonal wetlands, and restoring larger permanent wetlands to blend into the natural landscape. Wetland restoration projects have focused on the Great Lakes Plain, along Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River Valley. This area contains the densest breeding populations of waterfowl in the Northeast.



Service Habitat Conservation Programs in New York Conserve and Restore Wetlands

Our Habitat Conservation Program includes biologists working on Hydropower relicensing, Clean Water Act section 404 Permit Review, and Coastal Programs. The Service reviews permit applications and project proposals for a variety of activities ranging from maintenance of navigation channels through coastal wetlands, proactive wetland habitat restoration, to filling of wetlands to create fast land. The review and approval process for permits and proposed projects provides an opportunity to evaluate their potential impacts on wetlands. The key is to balance use with conservation of natural communities. We strive to promote long-term conservation of wetland animals and plants, and encourage joint stewardship with others through our involvement in these processes. Hydropower, the Nation's leading renewable energy resource, is not free of environmental impacts. While it is an important source of energy, hydro projects need to include sound measures that provide for protection and enhancement of the Nation's natural resources. Project relicensing may include mitigation projects that replace flooded wetland habitat and fish passage. The settlement for the FDR project on the St. Lawrence River provides funding for a Fisheries Enhancement, Mitigation, and Research Fund to address fishery restoration, and will likely include wetlands restoration to enhance fisheries habitat and improve water quality.



Service Endangered Species Conservation in New York Restores and Protects Wetlands Towards the Recovery of Listed Species

Wetlands provide essential breeding and/or foraging habitat for several State- and Federally-listed species in New York, including bald eagles, bog turtles, Indiana bats, piping plovers, and roseate terns. Several methods and procedures are used to conserve listed species, such as consultation to avoid adverse impacts from Federally-funded or permitted activities, habitat acquisition and restoration, and other on-the-ground activities for managing and monitoring endangered and threatened species. In January 2004, Environmental Defense (ED) launched an initiative to restore bog turtle habitat in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. This effort involves close collaboration among government and conservation group staff to help direct funding and technical assistance to landowners willing to restore bog turtle wetlands through prescribed grazing, mechanical cutting, herbicide application, and release of biological controls or controlled burns. The NYFO PFW and Endangered Species staff are working with the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and ED on 8 projects in New York to drive back woody vegetation and invasive species that make wet meadow habitat unsuitable for turtles.



WETLANDS WORK...

Wetlands are sponges. They store surface water, and slowly release surface water, rain, snowmelt, and groundwater. Wetlands maintain stream flows.

Wetlands stabilize shorelines and reduce erosion. On Coastal Long Island and along the Great Lakes, wetlands buffer storm surges from winter storms, hurricanes, and tropical storms. Upstate, wetlands at the margins of other lakes, rivers, bays, shorelines, and stream banks protect against erosion. Wetland plants hold the soil in place with their roots and absorb the energy of waves.

Wetland plants remove sediments by slowing down floodwaters. Wetlands improve water quality.

Wetlands support recreational opportunities including hiking, fishing, shellfishing, trapping, waterfowl hunting, nature photography, birding, and canoeing.

Wetlands produce timber for harvest, and wetland pastures provide forage for livestock grazing and hay production. Natural cranberry bogs are wetlands!

Wetlands support many rare plants and animals. In New York, wetlands support Federally-listed species like the bog turtle and bald eagle.

Wetlands provide nesting, breeding, foraging, and growing areas for scores of other fish and wildlife species.

Destruction of wetlands eliminates or severely minimizes their values.

- Drainage of wetlands prevents surface water storage and reduces their water quality enhancement function, while accelerating the flow of water downstream which may cause increased flood damages.
- Wetland filling does likewise, as well as destroying vital habitats for native fish and wildlife species.

Reference: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 1995b. America's wetlands: Our vital link between land and water.

